

**PATENT CLAIMS**

1. A method for forming a stepped profile from a layer sequence (2) in which,
  - 5 a) in a first patterning step, a first layer partial sequence (21) is removed apart from a first residual layer partial sequence (211),
  - b) in a second patterning step, a second layer partial sequence (22) located below the first layer partial sequence (21) is partially removed by means of etching with a second etchant,
  - 10 c) in a third patterning step, a third layer partial sequence (22) located below the second layer partial sequence (22) is partially removed by means of etching with a third etchant
  - 15 characterized in that
  - d) in the second patterning step, a region of the second layer partial sequence (22) that is located below the first residual layer partial sequence (211) is removed, a first projection (A) of the residual layer partial sequence (211) being formed,
  - 20 e) in the third patterning step, the first projection (A) of the first residual layer partial sequence (211) is removed.
2. The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the second and third patterning steps are effected in aqueous solution.
- 30 3. The method as claimed in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the first patterning step is carried out by means of etching with a first etchant.
- 35 4. The method as claimed in claim 3, characterized in that a substantially identical chemical composition is chosen for the first etchant and for the third etchant.

5. The method as claimed in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that, in the first patterning step, the first layer partial sequence (21) is removed  
5 to an extent such that a second projection (B) of the protective layer (3) arises, which second projection has a length  $t_1$  greater than a thickness  $d_1$  of the first layer partial sequence (21).
- 10 6. The method as claimed in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the first layer partial sequence (21) substantially comprises Ag, the second layer partial sequence (22) substantially comprises Ni, and the third layer partial sequence (23) substantially  
15 comprises Ti.
7. The method as claimed in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that an aqueous solution of nitric acid, preferably in a dilution ratio of 1: $z$  where  $2.0 < z < 8.0$ , is used as the second etchant.  
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8. The method as claimed in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that a mixture of hydrogen peroxide, ammonium hydroxide and water, preferably in a volume ratio of approximately 1: $x$ : $y$ , is used as the first and third etchants, where  $0.5 < x < 2.0$  and  
25  $4.0 < y < 10.0$ .
- 30 9. The method as claimed in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that, prior to the first patterning step, a protective layer (3) is provided on the first layer partial sequence (21).